PRESS RELEASE

The Cleveland Museum of Art
Public Relations / 11150 East Blvd. / Cleveland, Ohio 44106 / 216 421-7340

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UPDATED: CLEVELAND PAINTING TO BE REUNITED WITH RECENTLY REDISCOVERED COMPANIONPIECE

In recognition of the fact that American museums hold some of the best paintings by seventeenth-century French artists, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The Louvre are cooperating to assemble from American collections a panorama of the varied genres and styles of the period for the appreciation of both the French and American publics. French Paintings of the Seventeenth Century from American Collections will be shown at the Grand Palais in Paris, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and The Art Institute of Chicago throughout 1982.

The Cleveland Museum of Art is contributing to the American showings four excellent examples of major currents in seventeenth-century French painting. The luminous landscape style of Laurent de La Hyre (1606-1656) is represented by The Kiss of Peace and Justice. The Museum's Landscape with Nymphs and Satyrs captures the early lyrical classicism of the great master, Nicolas Poussin (1594-1656). The influence of Caravaggio can be seen in the dark, expressive power of The Repentant St. Peter by Georges de La Tour (1593-1652) and Samson by Valentin de Boulogne (1594-1632). The La Tour is one of only two paintings signed and dated by this artist and is therefore indispensable to the study of his work. The exhibition marks the first time that the brooding Samson will rejoin its recently rediscovered companionpiece, David, for a public showing.

The two companionpieces were originally executed by Valentin, among the finest of the followers of the Italian master Caravaggio, for Francesco Barberini,

(more)

nephew of Pope Urban VIII. The bee, the Barberini family's insignia, appears as a clasp on Samson's shoulder in the Cleveland painting. An 1812 marriage agreement split up these two works, with both paintings remaining in private collections, largely lost from public view until quite recently.

Samson was brought to the public's attention in the 1971 exhibition, Caravaggio and his Followers, organized for The Cleveland Museum of Art by guest curator, Professor Richard E. Spear of Oberlin College. The Museum acquired the painting from its private owner the following year. At that time, the David was presumed lost. But in Feburary of 1980, Ann Lurie, the Museum's curator of paintings, received a letter from Michael Brunner, a graduate student in art history, informing her of his fortuitous discovery of the painting in a California antique store.

A student of the Caravaggisti, or followers of Caravaggio, Brunner was attracted by the painting's size, style, and subject matter despite its very poor condition. Initial research suggested the identity of the painting, but Brunner had to pursue it for two months through another buyer, who had purchased it immediately without knowing its value.

Dr. Thomas Kren, now an assistant curator of paintings at the J. Paul Getty Museum, confirmed the painting to be Valentin's lost David. The identification was secured by the resemblance between this painting and an earlier photograph of it, by the stylistic affinities between this work and others by Valentin, and by the similarity between nineteenth-century additions to the height of both the David and the Samson which had concealed the Caravaggesque compactness of both works. After studying the Cleveland painting extensively, Gabrielle Kopelman of New York is restoring the David in preparation for the exhibition.

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For additional information, please contact the Public Relations Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.

Loans to three international exhibitions which could be publicized together

-- On a local level, all three could be publicized together. The angle: to emphasize to a local audience the variety of international exhibitions we are asked to contribute to and the high quality of our contributions. Further possible angle: an article on the task of the curator when the museum is asked to contribute to such exhibitions.

-- The two French exhibitions and the German exhibition could be publicized separately. The local German newspaper, Waechter und Anzeiger, is interested in seeing a press release about the Riemenschneider alone. Information is on its way about a national French newsletter or newspaper called France Amérique.

-- If the two French exhibitions were publicized together, emphasis could be on The Cleveland Museum and the Louvre as cooperating institutions. These exhibitions could be placed in the context of previous ones, such as Chardin, French Realism, and the European Vision of AMerica.

-- If each of the three exhibitions were publicized separately, an interesting story might be developed out of the reunion of Valentin's Samson with its companionpiece (see the release draft on seventeenth-century painting). The real story lies more with the companionpiece, which was recently rescued from oblivion, but since the companionpiece is privately owned, the reunion might not receive any publicity from that end. Several items in the Charles V exhibition are being reunited with companionpieces but not in as noteworthy a way. The hydraulic table fountain could be the most intriguing of the pieces on loan to the Charles V exhibition.

I have written three separate press releases so far, but could combine and refocus.

Margaret Lynch